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SUBJECT: NOTES ON 22ND MEETING OF JMG TASK FORCE, FIELD TRIP, 16 MAY 2008

¶1. (SBU) Summary: The 22nd Task Force (TF) meeting was in the form of a field trip to Walikale on 16 May 2008, at the invitation of the Congolese Delegation. Members heard three briefings: The Territorial Administrator talked about "sensitization" (awareness raising) efforts since March 15; the commandant of the 85th Battalion briefed on force readiness and operations against the FDLR; and the MONUC MILOB Team Commander spoke briefly on the security situation. "Sensitization" and DRRR are already in process at Walikale, and a few hundred ex-combatants have already returned to their home country. Facilitation raised the alleged export of minerals by FDLR from a highway airstrip outside the province capital, but the Territorial Administrator denied the allegation. End summary.

FDLR Go Home

¶2. (SBU) "Sensitization" and DRRR are by now familiar themes in Walikale; since December 2007, over 400 ex-combatants have returned to Rwanda. Territorial Administrator Dieudonne Tshishiku told TF members that the population originally formed four teams of 10 persons to undertake "sensitization," using Amani Program prepared propaganda. Even with their success, the teams want to continue working to rid the area of FDLR "atrocities." Since the arrival of 11th and 31st battalions as reinforcement for the 85th Brigade, military operations have pushed the FDLR deeper into the bush. There are about 1,000 IDP's within the territory, most of them living with host families.

¶3. (SBU) The 85th Brigade Commander, Col. Samy Matumo, told the TF that the general situation was calm. FARDC troops have excellent relations with local authorities, ANR, PNC and the population, he said, and eight MONUC-trained battalions are in North and South Kivu to implement the Nairobi Accord. FARDC has set up check-points to limit the free movements of FDLR, and are awaiting specific orders to attack FDLR units.

¶4. (SBU) Matumo has received bad press in Walikale, where many believe he is corrupt and involved in smuggling. His replies to the members' probing questions ranged from tart to impertinent, and he challenged the Rwandan Delegation to outline what it had done in support of the Nairobi process. The Rwandans coolly cited protection of the common border, production of the list of genocidaires, a re-integration program for ex-combatants and mass "sensitization" through the media.

Mineral Trafficking

¶5. (SBU) U.S. member Jenks asked the Territorial Administrator and MONUC what controls, monitoring or inspections they were carrying out at the Walikale airstrip, where the illicit export of minerals is an important FDLR economic activity. MONUC answered that there is no airstrip, but rather a section of the Walikale-Kisangangi road at Kilambo, 26 km from town, that small aircraft use. No authorities monitor or inspect the site. The Territorial Administrator said that the site is not in an area controlled by the FDLR, and that the USG had been misinformed. While the Facilitation

has no reason to believe that FDLR control the area, a MILOBS on the fringes of the meeting said that 10-15 planes land and take off there every day. The IEC driver said that around 30 tons of minerals move out per day, mostly cassiterite.

¶6. (SBU) Comment: The head of the Congolese Delegation was eager to show the TF that his government is making real progress in enforcing Nairobi, and the members appeared satisfied despite the 85th Brigade Commander's sullen presentation. The question of illicit mineral exports needs serious investigation and may well justify a demarche in favor of regular inspection, if not a permanent police/military presence in Kilambo. End comment.

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